

Double Standard

By Roger Schultz

The Creationist Movement in Modern America, by Raymond Eve and Francis Harrold
(Boston: Twayne, 1991)

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“Dispensational postmillennialism” is just one of the gems in this wretched book. Written by a sociologist and an anthropologist, it purports to be a “careful and fair analysis” of modern creationism. But don't be deceived—this anti-creationist tome is chiefly distinguished by its theological ignorance and condescending tone. Those wanting a more balanced treatment of the creationist movement should read Edward Larson's *Trial and Error* or Ronald Number's *The Creationists*.¹

Despite their feigned objectivity, Eve and Harrold's treatment of creationists has an annoying and patronizing tone. They say it is unfair to belittle creationists as “simpleminded or altogether uneducated”, for instance, because many have “above average intelligence”. When the authors do discover bright creationists (such as large numbers of industrial chemists) they try to explain it away, calling these creationists engineers rather than scientists. Eve and Harrold also reproduce creationist quotes in such a way as to make them appear silly and to highlight their errors, usually by adding “[sic]s”.

Eve and Harrold also try to defend “real science”, which they describe as “mainstream” or “consensus”. But consensus rarely exists in the scientific community, and what is remarkable about mainstream science is its lack of consensus on theories of origins.² But the authors employ “consensus” mantralike, perhaps hoping that invoking this magical term will cover a host of disagreements.

Defending scientific omniscience and the absolute authority of Darwin requires of Eve and Harrold an explanation of embarrassing scientific goofs. Creationists have had a field day tallying up and publicizing the hoaxes and blunders perpetrated by overzealous evolutionary scientists. Eve and Harrold respond that creationists are negativists who only want to poke fun of and discredit evolution, but never publish positive articles in “mainstream” scientific presses. Besides, they continue, mistakes made by evolutionary scientists are really not that serious.

1 Reviewed in *Contra Mundum* 6, pp. 73-75.

2 T.E. Wilder, “Paradigm Shift: The Rise of a New Biology”, *Contra Mundum* 6, (Winter, 1993): 31-40.

Take Nebraska Man, the million year old man who was used as evidence during the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925. The actual evidence was scanty—a solitary tooth. (Nebraska Man was symbolically important since William Jennings Bryan was a Nebraskan. Bryan quipped that for proof evolutionists had offered “the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing by the tooth.”) Identification of Nebraska Man was made by Charles Fairfield Osborne, an eminent paleontologist, Columbia professor and president of the Museum of National History. It was one of five “missing links” which so indisputably proved evolution in the 1920s that Osborne claimed he would stake his reputation on it. By the end of the decade all five had been exposed as hoaxes or miserable cases of mistaken identity. The evidence from which Nebraska Man was constructed turned out to be the tooth of an extinct species of pig. Someone joked that “This was the first time a man made a monkey of a pig, and a pig made a monkey of a man.”

Eve and Harrold valiantly attempt to explain away the embarrassing Nebraska Man episode. First, they say, Osborne wasn't a trained anthropologist. True; but he was a trained scientist and should have known his limitations. Nebraska Man illustrates how an evolutionist can cook the evidence to defend a hypothesis and slander opponents. Second, Eve and Harrold argue, pig teeth really do look like human teeth. Perhaps so—then anthropologists should be extra careful about making authoritative pronouncements about human remains. (One pop-science magazine published drawings of the physical structure of Nebraska Man, in which illustrators made technical points about the slope of his forehead and brain capacity. All from a pig's tooth!) Finally, the authors claim, scientists figured out the boo-boo, proving that eventually science always arrives at the truth.

Their defense of Osborne makes the attack on Carl Baugh all the more interesting. The authors use Rev. Baugh, a *soi-disant* creation scientist who other creationists consider a quack, as an example of the discredibility of creation science. Rev. Baugh claimed that a fossilized fish tooth was human, though he later discovered his error and recanted. One might expect Eve and Harrold to excuse him, saying that 1) Baugh wasn't a trained anthropologist, 2) it really looked like a human tooth, and 3) a creationist discovered and admitted his error, proving the accuracy of creation science. But they do not extend to Rev. Baugh the same courtesy as to Dr. Osborne. Rather, they imply that such a gross mistake compromises the integrity of creationism.

As it turns out, mistakes are an annoying feature of this book. Calvin College's Davis Young, for instance, is lumped with gap theorists. James [sic] Robbins is identified as a “reconstructionist theologian”. (John Robbins would be shocked to hear this, for he has tirelessly criticized Reconstructionists in recent years.)³ Best of all, Eve and Harrold introduce “*dispensational postmillennialism*”, even italicizing this theological oxymoron so one cannot miss it.

Eve and Harrold's ignorance of conservative Christianity is rivaled only by their terror of it. The book is a constant exercise in fundaphobia. Rousas Rushdoony (one of those “dispensational [sic] postmillennialists”) advocates “religious totalitarianism”, has “little sympathy for religious liberty”, wants to destroy the Bill of Rights, and like other

3 See John Robbins, “Queer Christianity”, *Contra Mundum* 2, (Winter, 1992): 65-67. See also his reviews and essays in the *Trinity Review*.

Christian Reconstructionists long to execute delinquent children. Given their way, creationists would silence and drive from the classroom all evolutionary scientists. Yet Eve and Harrold cannot name a single evolutionist who lost a job in the public schools, even during the heyday of anti-evolution activism in the 1920s. Compare that to the systematic harassment of creationists in the last decade by a supposedly disinterested scientific establishment. Creationists who have been fired for their views are barely mentioned in the book and certainly receive no sympathy.⁴

The book does have interesting statistical material. There is—and this frightens the authors—a high acceptance of creationism in the hinterland. A significant percentage of high school teachers, including science teachers, believe that Creationism should be taught in state school classes. (p. 163) Creationism is also more prevalent among women and blacks than white males. (Whoa! What will the politically correct say about this?)

Eve and Harrold also offer a sociological interpretation of the Creationist movement. Creationists, they suggest, have an authoritarian mindset and suffer from status anxiety. Perhaps. But the same arguments could be applied to Darwinists, who hold positions which were traditionally highly prestigious, but whose status and integrity has been challenged by creationists. Eve and Harrold's analysis makes one curious about the psychological and sociological profile of anti-creationists.

Eve and Harrold recognize that there is a conflict of world views behind the creation-evolution conflict. Though they never state their theological beliefs, the book reveals their presuppositions. They repeatedly bring up theistic evolution (an option they apparently favor), complain about fundamentalist doctrines, scoff at the idea of absolute ethical values, repudiate the inerrant standard of scripture, dismiss the vicarious atonement of Christ, and are incredulous that people still believe in hell. Having rejected the gospel of Christ, it is no surprise that they reject the Biblical account of human origins.

The creation-evolution controversy is a crisis of faith. On the one hand stands the faith that the world was framed by the word of God (Hebrews 11:3). Contrasted to that is a humanistic faith which in unrighteousness rejects the truth of God (Romans 1:18). Eve and Harrold conclude their book with this statement: “[M]ost individuals construct their reality far more on the basis of what they need or wish for it to be than on the basis of the laws of science. The creation-evolution controversy is likely to be no different.” They are more accurate than they realize.

4 Recently, the case of Forrest Mims and Henry Morris's (and the Institute for Creation Research's) accreditation battle with the state of California are the most significant. For past battles, see Jerry Bergman, *The Criterion*, (Richfield, MN: Onesimus, 1984).